

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHHT #1892/01 2630458
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 200458Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0293

UNCLAS ATHENS 001892

SIPDIS

INFO AMEMBASSY EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ZAGREB, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TIRANA, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SKOPJE, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SOFIA, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ZAGREB, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ISTANBUL, PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MADRID, PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK, PRIORITY

AIDAC
SIPDIS

STATE FOR M U/S FORE
STATE FOR EUR/EX, EUR/SE, EUR/ACE
STATE FOR OES/PDAS RHARNISH
STATE FOR OES/EGC GTHOMPSON
STATE FOR OES/ENV LBRUTTEN
DEPARTMENT PASS TO USAID/W,
AGRICULTURE FOR MREY, GKIMBALL
USUN FOR TMALEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV KGHG SENV SOCI ENGR EAID GR

SUBJECT: Athens "Challenge of Climate" Conference - Oct 14-16

REF:

A) State 80334 B) Athens 1761 C) Athens 1741 D) Athens 1714 E)
Athens 1640 F) Athens 1800 G) Athens 1723

¶1. Summary. Details of the upcoming "The Challenge of Change" climate change conference are solidifying in wake of the recent national elections in Greece. As the list of confirmed speakers fills with prominent members of Government and the Energy community, the conference has grown to include a significant discussion on fires and stabilization of burned areas, participation in climate change initiatives and several proposed parallel sessions. USG participation will include Congressman Faleomavaega and U.S. Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management Tom Harbour; conference organizers are very interested in State Department representation to speak. The conference will conclude with the announcement of Athens joining the Clinton Climate Initiative Large Cities Group (C-40), and a Ministerial-level signing of "The Athens Declaration" - an EU-Mediterranean partnership for policies on new renewable energy and reductions of carbon emissions by 2020. End Summary.

The Challenge of Change "Summit"

¶2. Public information on the upcoming climate change conference in Greece continues to be limited to their English and Russian language website (www.athens-summit.com). As business in Athens resumed following the annual August vacation exodus, details have gradually solidified. In the past week, the ambitious list of speakers started to materialize, presenting what looks to be a productive event with regard to Climate Change, for Greece and the Mediterranean region as a whole. On September 18, Econ Officer visited James Angelus, President of conference organizer AC&C. According to Angelus, targeted audience includes corporate and industry leaders in energy, and the primary goal is to bring these senior representatives together with political leaders, members of academia and the advocacy arena. The overarching goal is to identify a synergistic approach to addressing the global challenges of climate change, rather than each stakeholder working in parallel, or in some cases in opposition to each other.

¶3. Touted as being under the auspices of Greek President Papoulias, this conference seeks to capitalize on the increasingly important position Greece is taking in the energy world. The organizing committee obtained support of both Prime Minister Karamanlis and opposition party leader George Papandreou - both of whom are expected to speak. Econ Officer met with Vice Chairman of the Advisory Board Andreas Papandreou on August 23, who explained that the effort is not to try to make the conference bi-partisan, but rather to make it apolitical, as climate change affects everyone. Similarly, the conference is being established in an effort to provide a platform for debate and discussion between corporations and advocacy groups for the prospects for future cooperation.

USG Involvement

14. The advisory board is increasingly interested in USG participation. Offering the opportunity to discuss USG positions and programs on climate change, to include the upcoming WIREC conference in Spring 2008 (Ref A), Angelus expressed a desire for senior State Department representation, either from EUR, EUR/SE or OES to speak, likely in the opening morning session on Monday October 15. Post is prepared to have a speaker at the event, however given the potential for high profile press, Post agrees that OES or other State Department participation offers an opportunity for a statement of Administration positions to have broad public impact. Additionally, following discussions with Staffdel Faleomavaega (D- American Samoa) in late August, the conference invited and recently confirmed Congressman Faleomavaega's participation, speaking on Climate Change issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

Fire Response

15. In response to the tragedy of the recent fires (Refs B-E), and specifically the ongoing efforts of the U.S. Forest Service and Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team support through USAID/OFDA, conference organizers are planning an additional seminar to discuss Fire Prevention and Protection. Initially setting this as a stand alone seminar before the conference, they determined there was sufficient interest and added a session at the very end of the conference to discuss USFS suggestions for stabilization and rehabilitation efforts (Ref F). (Note: Any USFS statement should be a general statement of USFS practices, since they will presumably not have had time to fully vet their TA proposal with the GOG, and anyway, it's the GOG that should present its own stabilization plans, on its own schedule). This seminar will include USFS Director of Fire and Aviation Management Tom Harbour, as well as representatives of the Greek Fire Brigades, civil protection organizations and local university experts on Forest Economics and Management.

16. The fire response discussion will focus on two primary goals. The first includes discussion of the required stabilization and rehabilitation efforts following the recent fires. This discussion could also touch on plans for additional support from the U.S., including a proposed BAER team visit, as well as similar efforts by oth@ Australia. A key concern mitigation of future disasters is putting public awareness campaign something similar to Smoglets to distribute wideQation. Additionally, the9 to increase awareness among the youth via direct involvement in clean-up and educational projects such as annual awareness poster competitions, much like those done locally regarding pollution on the beaches. On the Governmental side, the session will discuss better coordination of efforts and creation of reliable and viable disaster reaction plans. (Comment: Post continues to encourage Department concurrence for a U.S. based regional response plan, as suggested in Ref G. This plan stages USG aviation assets in the region during peak wildfire season in order to better offer response to multiple countries' crises when needed. While monetary contributions by the USG never intended to come close to matching those of the EU, the GoG response to our USFS/OFDA team's visit has been extremely favorable, illustrating that our ability to provide leadership and experience in crisis management is both great and sought after. End Comment).

2020 and C40

17. The ultimate product of the conference is intended to be two formal announcements of international cooperation on climate change. Already announced on the schedule is the proposed signing of an Athens Declaration. This declaration would be an EU-Mediterranean agreement proposing to extend the EU policies on energy to neighboring non-EU countries of the Mediterranean - specifically the reduction of carbon emissions by 20 percent and the increase of renewable energy sources by 20 percent by the year 2020. (Comment: Greece is currently ranked in the bottom four countries of the EU regarding EU energy requirements is expected to fail to meet the EU required energy policy goals by 2010, and is similarly off track to meet the existing goals of 2020). While specific attendance has not yet been confirmed, Angelus predicts significant international Ministerial level participation in this ceremony.

18. Post recently confirmed through the Clinton Climate Initiative organization that the Mayor of Athens will soon receive an official invitation to be the 39th member of the C40 Large Cities Group (www.c40cities.org). This invitation has been expected, and according to Angelus, their intent is to announce the invitation to this program, aimed at reducing emissions and increasing energy efficiency, at the conference. This global initiative will provide Greece with significant help in the coming year.

19. Comment. Our initial doubts about the ability to organize this event, given the complete lack of detail only six weeks ago, are largely assuaged. The inclusion of Tom Harbour and the session on Fire Management, the invitation to the C40 Group of Large Cities and

the proposed Athens Declaration offer the ability for significant ground to be covered on a myriad of issues. When combined with the prominent list of speakers, and anticipated guests - the opportunity clearly exists to bridge the gap between advocacy and the energy industry. Post feels the opportunity for Department representatives to participate in the conference, in order to voice USG programs, including WIREC 08, is worthy. End Comment.

COUNTRYMAN